

**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY,  
MURFREESBORO, TN**

**CHARLES K. WOLFE AUDIO COLLECTION**

**ACC. NO: 05-023**

The processing of the Charles K. Wolfe Audio Collection and the preparation of this finding aid was made possible by a generous grant from the GRAMMY Foundation® (April 2013 – March 2014).

**Creator:**

Wolfe, Charles K.

**Type of Material:**

Indexes

Electronic documents (scans of tapes, correspondence etc.)

Audio tapes

Correspondence--1920-1930

**Physical Description:**

333 Open reel audio tapes-High priority for transfer

913 Cassette tapes-High priority for transfer

1349 Cassette tapes-Low priority for transfer

65 Open reel audio tapes-High priority for transfer

\*numbers not complete

**Dates:**

1929-2006

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

This collection of audio tapes was created by Dr. Charles K. Wolfe during the course of his career as collector, scholar, educator and author on topics relating to the vernacular music of the American South circa 1975-2005.

**Access:**

This collection is open for research. The collection is cataloged and may be searched online through the Center for Popular Music website: <http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/index.html>

**Restrictions:**

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**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

In February, 2012, the family of the late Dr. Charles K. Wolfe (1943-2006) donated Dr. Wolfe's

collection of sound recordings and documents to the Center for Popular Music. The Charles K. Wolfe Audio Collection (05-023) contains over 3000 audio tape recordings, Wolfe's tape indexes and some historic correspondence. The majority of the recordings in the collection were created or collected by Dr. Wolfe during his many years of research relating to American roots music. Accession number 05-023 also contains a substantial amount of material that was dubbed from or perhaps loaned to Wolfe by other collectors and researchers. This information is notated in the database if known.

**Subjects/Index Terms:**

Country musicians—Interviews  
Country music  
Old-time music  
Fiddling  
Grand Ole Opry  
String bands  
Bluegrass musicians—Interviews  
African American musicians—Interviews  
Western Swing  
Ballads

**Names**

Acuff, Roy  
Wills, Bob, 1905-1975  
Hicks, Dee  
Monroe, Bill, 1911-1996  
Jones, Grandpa, 1913-1998  
Travis, Merle  
Hartford, John  
Krauss, Alison, 1971-  
Louvin, Charlie, 1927-2011  
Cutrer, T. Tommy  
Martin, Benny  
Carter, Maybelle, 1909-1978  
Seeger, Mike, 1933-2009  
Rinzler, Ralph  
King, James  
Williams, Paul  
McGee Brothers  
McGee, Sam, 1894-1975  
McGee, Kirk, 1899-1983  
Macon, Uncle Dave, 1870-1952  
Stripling Brothers  
Booker, John  
Georgia Yellowhammers

Malone, Kasper "Stranger"  
Smith, Arthur, 1898-1971 [Smith, Fiddlin' Arthur]

**Agency History/biographical sketch:**

Dr. Charles K. Wolfe was born in Sedalia, Missouri in 1943. Wolfe earned his B.A. in English at Southwest Missouri State University and later continued his studies at the University of Kansas in Lawrence where he was awarded his Master's degree and then his Ph.D. in 1971. In 1970, he began his 35 year tenure as a professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Murfreesboro provided Wolfe with an excellent, centrally located base of operations from which he could easily travel all over the south to meet and interview the pioneers of the gospel and country music he would spend his life documenting and championing.

Wolfe was a highly prolific scholar. During his long career as a writer, editor, lecturer and fan of southern vernacular music, he wrote scores of liner notes for reissue projects, wrote (or coauthored) more than 20 books and appeared as an expert on TV, radio and in documentary films and was also a major supporter of roots music community projects in Middle Tennessee such as Uncle Dave Macon Days in his home town of Murfreesboro. Wolfe was one of the most highly respected people in the field of American vernacular music. He received many honors and awards for his work such as the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award, Association for Recorded Sound Collections' Lifetime Achievement Award, the International Bluegrass Music Association's Distinguished Achievement Award and he was also a three time Grammy nominee. Wolfe retired from university work in 2005 but continued his studies and writing up until his death in February of 2006.

**Scope and content:**

The Charles K. Wolfe Audio Collection is comprised of 13 linear feet of materials. The collection is stored in archival boxes and the individual items are organized numerically. This collection contains audio tapes in 5" and 7" open reel format and cassette format, including Wolfe's original indexes and one box of fan correspondence sent to guitarist/singer, Jack Jackson circa 1929-1931.

The Charles K. Wolfe Audio Collection consists mainly of audio tapes relating to the vernacular musical styles of the American south circa 1920-2000s. Styles represented within the collection include; country/old time/string band music, fiddling, blues, classic jazz, ballads, blues, western swing, Hawaiian, folk songs, shape note singing, singing schools, gospel quartet singing and rockabilly. The tapes contain oral histories and interviews with many pioneering country and gospel musicians, singers, songwriters, producers and publishers such as; Bill Monroe, Roy Acuff, Sam and Kirk McGee, Dick Rutherford, Sid Harkreader, Alison Krauss, Art Galbraith, Clyde Davenport, Frank Walker, Ernest Stoneman, Kitty Wells, Maybelle Carter, James D. Walbert, Benny Williams, Louise Woods-Woodward, and Clarence Myer. Interviews also give firsthand accounts of the early history of the Grand Old Opry, National Barn Dance and Renfro Valley Barn Dance as well as musicians and groups that include; Poplin-Woods Tennessee String Band, Hack's String Band, Skillet Lickers, Georgia Yellowhammers, Doc Roberts, Dykes Magic City Trio, Perry County Music Makers, Jess Young, Smith's Sacred Singers, Vaughan Quartet,

Taylor's Kentucky Boys, Uncle Dave Macon, Burnett & Rutherford, Byrd Moore, the Tweedy Brothers, Red Fox Chasers, Stamps Quartet, James D. Vaughan, George Jones, Lefty Frizzell and more.

Interviews relate to specific regions such as Middle Tennessee, East Tennessee, North Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, Western North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky that had a profound impact on early country, blues and gospel music. Wolfe's interviews with musicians include highly significant topics such as impressions of other musicians, details of recording sessions, individual performance styles and techniques, influences, memories of other musicians, travelling, songwriting, business aspects, gospel publishing, discographical information as well as autobiographical and genealogical information.

The collection also features many recorded musical performances on unique field recordings, historic radio transcriptions, dubs (and originals) of small label/vanity label recordings and demo tapes as well as copies of similar recordings made by fellow scholars, musicians and folklorists. The collection also includes one box of fan correspondence sent to guitarist/singer, Jack Jackson by radio listeners during his stint as the "Strolling Yodeler" on WLAC radio in Nashville circa 1929-1931 as well as four of Wolfe's original tape collection indexes.

### **Series Description:**

- Box # to # High priority for transfer 7" and 5" open reel tapes
- Box # to # High priority for transfer cassette tapes
- Box # to # Low priority for transfer 7" and 5" open reel tapes
- Box # to # Low priority for transfer cassette tapes
- Box # to # Low priority for transfer commercial cassette tapes
- Box # to # Original Wolfe index binders for open reel and cassette tapes
- Box # Jack Jackson WLAC correspondence

### **Collection Contents: (Folder/box list):**

#### **Audio tapes-High Priority for transfer**

**Cassette tapes**-1246 (Wolfe 00337-02150)

**Open reel tapes**-333 (315 @7" 18 @5") (Wolfe 00001-00335)

\*Many of these tapes have had labels or accompanying correspondence scanned. Refer to database for this information.

#### **Audio tapes-Low priority for transfer**

*Cassette tapes*-1355 in 8 Boxes

**Box 1**-211 tapes (Wolfe 04000-04210)

**Box 2**-179 tapes (Wolfe 04391-04390)

**Box 3**-159 tapes (Wolfe 04391-04550)

**Box 4**-183 tapes (Wolfe 04551-04734)

**Box 5**-171 tapes (Wolfe 04735-04906)

**Box 6**-168 tapes (Wolfe 04907-05075)

**Box 7**-150 tapes (Wolfe 05076-05226)

**Box 8**-128 tapes (Wolfe 05227-05355)

*7" Open reel tapes- 20 Boxes*

**Box 1**-18 tapes (Wolfe 05356-05374)

**Box 2**-13 tapes (Wolfe 05375-05388)

**Box 3**-20 tapes (Wolfe 05389-05408)

**Box 4** – 15 tapes (Wolfe 05409-05423)

**Box 5** – 15 tapes (Wolfe 05424-05438)

**Box 6** – 17 tapes (Wolfe 05439-05455)

**Box 7** – 17 tapes (Wolfe 05456-05472)

**Box 8** – 16 tapes (Wolfe 05473- 05488)

**Box 9** – 19 tapes (Wolfe 05489-05507)

**Box 10** – 17 tapes (Wolfe 05508-05524)

**Box 11** – 17 tapes (Wolfe 0025-05541)

**Box 12** – 21 tapes (Wolfe 05542-05562)

**Box 13** – 19 tapes (Wolfe 05563-05581)

**Box 14** – 23 tapes (Wolfe 05582-05604)

**Box 15** – 19 tapes (Wolfe 05605-05623)

**Box 16** – 20 tapes (Wolfe 05624-05643)

**Box 17** – 20 tapes (Wolfe 05644-05663)

**Box 18** – 24 tapes (Wolfe 05664-05687)

**Box 19** - 17 tapes (Wolfe 05688-05704)

**Box 20** – 29 tapes (Wolfe 05705-05733)

## **Indexes-Open reel audio tapes**

**Index 1-100** Red three ring binder with individual sheets with detailed information about tapes numbered approximately 1-100 using Wolfe's numbering system. Information contained within is not complete.

**Index 100-200** Red three ring binder with individual sheets with detailed information about tapes numbered approximately 100-200 using Wolfe's numbering system. Information contained within is not complete.

**Index 200-300** Red three ring binder with individual sheets with detailed information about tapes numbered approximately 200-300 using Wolfe's numbering system. Information contained within is not complete.

**Cassette Index** Brown three ring binder with individual sheets with detailed information about tapes numbered approximately c2-c90 using Wolfe's numbering system. Information contained within is not complete.

## **Historic documents**

**Box "Jack Jackson Folders"** Three folders of fan mail correspondence sent to singer/guitarist, Jack Jackson during his tenure as the "Strolling Yodeler" on WLAC radio in Nashville circa 1929-31

**Materials Cataloged Separately:**

The audio tapes of the highest priority for transfer are available on the Center for Popular Music servers. Noteworthy correspondence, documents or labels connected to each tape have been scanned and are available on the Center for Popular Music servers.

**Arrangement:**

Original order of the audio tapes has been maintained in so far as possible. The processor devised the basic organizational scheme for the collection, reorganizing the materials within component groups where necessary. Correspondence is filed chronologically.

**Location:**

All of the materials are currently stored in the boxes that comprise the entire collection and are housed with other manuscript collections by accession number.

**Related Materials:**

Charles Wolfe Manuscript Collection (incomplete and unprocessed; inventory available)

Charlie Acuff Collection 96-018

Tommy Magness Collection 94-035

Art Satherly Collection 94-065

jjf-March, 2014